



The Michigan **DVOCATE**

Victims of Crime Act Crime Victims Fund

■ by Steve Derene

In This Issue

Victims of Crime Act
Crime Victims Fund 2

Crime Victims'
Rights Week 3

VOCA Grantees Making
a Difference 4

- Pets: The Silent Victims
- A Perspective on Progress

Screening for Community
Violence 5

Training Opportunities 6

Council of Advocates 7

Web Resources 7

VOCA Calendar 8

A Michigan

Crime Victim Services

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Just a little over twenty years ago the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime issued its recommendations for the field of victim rights

and services. Many recommendations have already been implemented, such as the 1984 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), while some, such as recognition of victim rights in the U.S. Constitution, are still being vigorously pursued.

VOCA remains the federal government's primary vehicle supporting direct services to victims of all crimes. The creation of the Crime Victims Fund, into which federal criminal fines, forfeitures, special assessments and other penalties are deposited, represented a promise by the federal government to sustain, enhance, and expand services to victims of crime.

Deposits into the Crime Victims Fund during its first year totaled \$68 million and continued to grow yearly between \$130 - \$200 million until 1996 when, because of a single bank fraud case, deposits jumped to \$529 million. That windfall was followed in 1999 with other, super-duper windfalls; deposits into the Fund reached nearly \$1 billion. A quick glance at deposits into the Crime Victims Fund shows rather dramatic fluctuations in deposits—large peaks followed by gradual declines (see graph on page 2). This feature has been one of the most challenging for state VOCA assistance administrators to

manage. And it hasn't escaped the notice of Congress, the keepers of the VOCA purse.

Although the VOCA statute calls for the entire amount of each year's Crime Victims Fund deposits to be distributed the following year, Congress began imposing limitations on annual obligations—the so-called "caps" on VOCA spending. While there are undoubtedly several underlying reasons for Congress placing a cap on VOCA spending, their express purpose is to "stabilize future funding for these programs." Even in years in which there have been large deposits, the amount available for VOCA programs is limited. As a result, by the beginning of federal fiscal year 2003, a substantial balance totaling \$720 million has accumulated in the Fund. Despite this balance, Congress has approved only minimal increases in how much of the Crime Victims Fund can be spent. Combined with recent congressional changes made in fund distributions, the VOCA cap will cause a significant reduction in the amount of funds available for VOCA state victim assistance grants—this at a time when all public and private financial support for victim services

Continued on page 2

Michigan Department
of Community Health



Michigan Crime Victim
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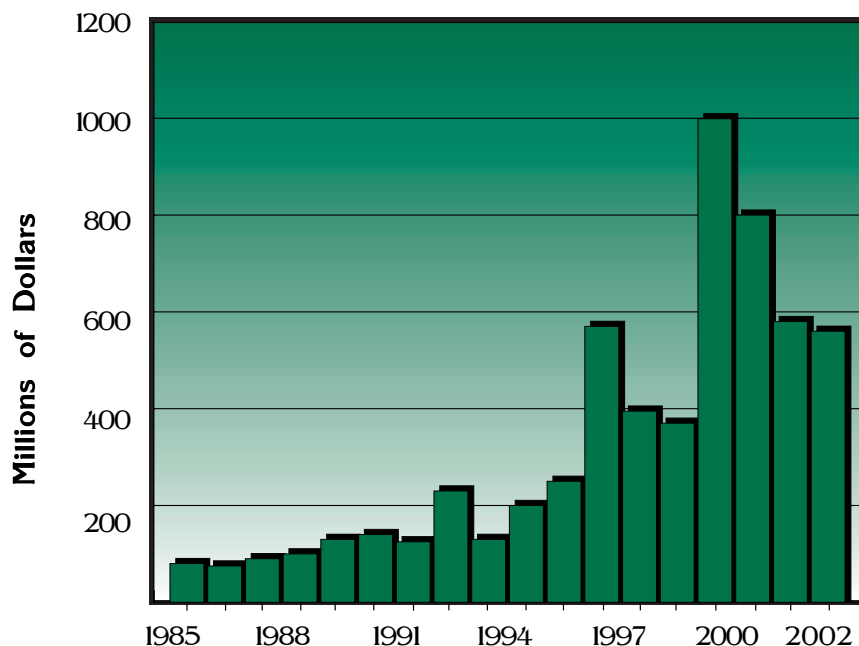
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Deposits into the Crime Victims Fund



Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, Victims of Crime Act Crime Victims Fund, January 2002

Continued from page 1

is being reduced. It is critical to ensure adequate long-term support for services to victims of all crimes. Before Congress imposed VOCA caps and the entire Fund was distributed each year, funding levels were pretty much taken for granted—in both good times and bad.

Now that Congress has intervened by setting annual caps, victim advocates have focused their attention on communicating to Congress why an adequate level of VOCA funding is critical to meet the needs of crime victims. At the national, state, and local levels, advocates are working together to educate policymakers about VOCA, emphasizing that these funds are from criminals, not taxpayers, and play an essential role in serving crime victims. A consortium of national advocacy groups, including the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA), the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards (NACVCB), National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA), National Center for Victims of

Crime (NCVC), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), and Parents of Murdered Children (POMC) issued a joint statement supporting a higher VOCA cap. Similarly, service providers and individual crime victims have been contacting their representatives in Congress to urge them to release more VOCA funds. While these efforts may not have an immediate positive result, they are essential to the long-term success and stability of VOCA funding. This is really the first time that members of Congress have had any occasion to hear and learn about VOCA, and unless they hear from their constituents, they will assume that everything is working fine. Even one phone call, letter, fax, or email from a constituent can bring this issue to a legislator's attention. ▀

Steve Derene serves as Executive Director of the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators (NAVAA). Mr. Derene has worked in the crime victim program and policy area since 1979 and has advised the U.S. Department of Justice on the development and guidelines for the implementation of VOCA.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

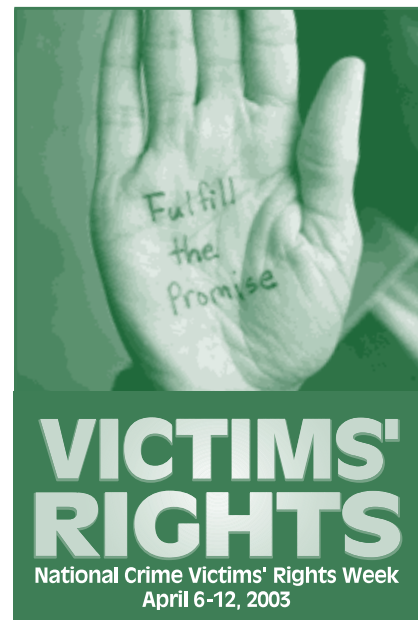
April 6 - 12, 2003

Victims' Rights: Fulfill the Promise

by Jennifer Sykes McLaughlin

What began as a local recognition of crime victims in the Philadelphia District Attorney's office in 1975 is now observed nationally. Since 1982, when a presidential task force cited the country's neglect of crime victims, a national week of reflection has been proclaimed in April. Though the theme of National Crime Victims' Rights Week varies annually, the focus remains constant: this week is dedicated to bringing honor to victims, demonstrating gratitude to victim advocates, and highlighting victims' rights so that we may, as this year's theme reminds us, "*fulfill the promise.*"

Tributes held during this 23rd National Crime Victims' Rights Week will therefore encourage communities to embrace the cause of victims' rights and services. This year's theme will also challenge us all to consider what must be done yet to *fulfill the promise* of providing victims with compassionate support, services, dignity, and justice. Various events are scheduled throughout the country at national, state, and local levels.



- 1972** First three victim assistance programs are established in Missouri, California, and Washington, D.C.
- 1975** First "Victims' Rights Week" is organized by the Philadelphia District Attorney
- 1981** Ronald Reagan becomes the first President to proclaim "Crime Victims' Rights Week" in April
- 1984** Passage of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) establishes the Crime Victims Fund, made up of federal criminal fines, penalties, and bond forfeitures, to support state victim compensation and local victim service programs
- 1988** Michigan passes a crime victims constitutional amendment with over 80 percent of the vote
- 1997** Congress passes the Victims' Rights Clarification Act to allow victims to attend trial and appear as impact witnesses
- 2003** The Office for Victims of Crime celebrates its 20th anniversary of service to crime victims and those who assist them

Source: The 2003 OVC NCVRW Resource Guide

Michigan's Vigil

Michigan will gather to commemorate the National Crime Victims' Rights Week with a candlelight vigil and awareness program on April 9th at the State Capitol in Lansing. Michigan State Representative William Van Regenmorter, author of Michigan's Crime Victims' Rights Act, will host the event, which commences at 6:00 p.m. in the first floor rotunda. This gathering is designed to increase awareness of crime victims' rights and victim support organizations. Each year a keynote speaker is selected for "overcoming tragedy and/or demonstrating outstanding advocacy for victims." The evening is a time for survivors to share reflections, advocates to be honored, and legislators and the public to reaffirm their commitment to crime victims' rights.

For further information on Michigan's candlelight vigil and awareness program please contact Denice Purves (517-373-8900). ▼

Jennifer Sykes McLaughlin, MA, is a Research Associate at the Michigan Public Health Institute.

Pets: The Silent Victims

by Leigh Ann Knope of LACASA in Howell

This summer our shelter will welcome a new group of survivors: the pets of those who utilize our services. Two newly-constructed kennel rooms will allow residential clients to house family pets on-site: dogs, cats, birds, fish, gerbils, iguanas, and maybe even the occasional snake.

Sheltering pets on-site is supported by sound research. Approximately half of all violent relationships involve pet abuse. One in five survivors delay leaving an abusive home because they fear for the safety of the pets left behind. The cycle of violence continues: one in three child survivors will enact violence toward an animal. Importantly, animals are therapeutic while families are in shelter; they provide unconditional love and assist greatly in healing from abuse.

Community response

Last year our community formed the Animal Cruelty Task Force, a subcommittee of the Livingston Domestic & Sexual Violence Prevention Council. Donations from our Capital Campaign funded the construction of two pet rooms at the shelter and Animal Control provided extensive support. Animal care professionals donated cages and designed the rooms. A local student group will donate the construction. We are seeking additional funding for this project (for pet exams, vaccinations, medications, food, etc.), but we expect this vision will soon be realized.

An even greater mission

Our hope for the future is to establish ongoing resources for our clients as well as education for the community. We hope to provide reeducation and healing to child witnesses of pet violence, educate veterinarians and social service professionals in our community, and create community-wide protocols for recognizing and taking action about this connection. The world is becoming more aware of the correlation between animal violence and inter-personal violence, and we all have the power to make a difference. One measure other shelters can take is to partner with local humane organizations to house clients' pets. These programs will ultimately provide healing for all beings that make up a family. ▀

Leigh Ann Knope is the Community Coordinator at LACASA in Howell. She can be contacted at lknope@lacasa1.org.

A Perspective on Progress

by Althea Grant of the Detroit Police Department

“Don’t talk to her. You’ll only make the victim cry.” — a police officer, speaking to a victim advocate

The police officer’s comments were made in January of 1976, my first day on the job as a victim advocate. In those days it was not uncommon for police officers to show a lack of understanding that it was okay if she cried, that we were there to help her through her emotional trauma. With over 25 years of service to victim advocates, I am in a position to report that serious progress has been made.

I have pushed for—and witnessed—serious incremental improvements in the last 25 years as a victim advocate working in the Rape Counseling Center. Back in 1976 we victim advocates relied entirely on hospital referrals, and it was frustrating to know that victims were slipping through the cracks. Today we work with complete information: our VOCA-funded child social workers receive complete and accurate records issued by police officers, allowing us to reach *every* survivor that passes through the police department. These records are vital to establishing a relationship with child survivors and their families within days of their interaction with the police. We work closely with the “Kiddie Squad,” police officers assigned to work solely with children. It is reassuring to know that we are now making an initial contact to offer services to every child that comes through our system.

Today the Detroit PD has the daunting task of assisting a vast number of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault—over 24,000 domestic violence and 2000 sexual assault reports last year. Many victims are children younger than 13 years old.

As a community we have made great progress, and I credit the police department for growing most of all. Today when we offer our trainings, we notice that officers are asking insightful, sensitive questions; we know that the knowledge base has vastly improved. We have struggled to change attitudes and fought to reach more victims. Ours is a story shared by other victim service programs who believed that serving within the establishment could work. It is a story whose end has not yet been realized, but one that promises to improve as we continue our mission. ▀

Althea Grant is the Director of Rape Counseling Center at the Detroit Police Department.

Screening for Community Violence in Primary Care Settings

by Gregory A. Leskin

In a study conducted at Boston Medical Center's Young Men's Clinic, a strong correlation was found between a patient's level of community violence exposure and their psychopathology.

Further findings suggest the need for a collaborative model of health care whereby a primary care physician will inquire about a patient's history of abuse and exposure to community violence and make appropriate referrals to psychologists. The primary care clinic may serve as an important "gateway" for identifying victims of crime who could benefit from psychological services and treatment.

For many inner city young adults, violence commonly occurs in the family, in schools, and on the streets. The term "community violence" is defined as intentional human acts that involve physical force or injury and may occur anywhere, including at home or within the community. Examples of community violence include physical and sexual assault at home, being shot at by a passing car, or witnessing a homicide. Community violence might be an overly inclusive term, but it is useful when working with traumatized individuals, especially at-risk, African American males. When working clinically with minority individuals, a community violence model can provide mental health professionals with a broader perspective of the intensity and frequency of the violence that permeates these young men's lives.

Even though violent crime rates appear to be decreasing, urban and suburban Americans still experience criminal violence at very high rates. Within African American communities, the violent crime rate is even higher. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health reported that one in every 38 black male teenagers (age 15-19) was shot or stabbed in 1994. The Massachusetts rate of nonfatal firearm assault injuries in 1994 was 159.3 per 100,000 African Americans, compared to 75.3 per 100,000 Hispanics and 2.9 per 100,000 whites. This high level of violence continues to represent a major challenge not only for law enforcement, but also for the medical and mental health communities who treat the bodily injuries and human suffering caused by criminal violence.

The study I was involved with at Boston Medical Center's Young Men's Clinic was located in an urban, high-crime area where most of the city's minority population resides. We conducted interviews with 30 African American men

(age 18-32) who came to the Young Men's Clinic for a regularly scheduled medical visit and found very high rates of community victimization and related psychopathology among these men. We discovered this population had numerous direct victimization experiences (such as being injured or having their life threatened), with the participants reporting a mean number of 21.2 such episodes. A strong correlation between the level of violence exposure and psychopathology was found; many met the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Many trauma patients do not seek mental health services, but will request medical services for their bodily pains. This study suggests that many of the patients coming to the Clinic for treatment of medical problems would also be well served if asked about their histories of abuse and trauma. Many models of care call for screening and referral; unfortunately, these models can be ineffective due to lack of follow-through by patients. These findings suggest advantages to embracing a collaborative model of behavioral healthcare whereby the primary care physician refers patients *directly* to a psychologist in the Clinic for trauma screening and psychological evaluation. In this way, behavioral health provides the first line of treatment in the primary care setting and patient follow-through is assured. Such an integrated, multidisciplinary approach would actively identify trauma patients for possible treatment.

Our study does suggest future direction. It is our hope that by educating patients and physicians in medical settings about the potential impact of traumatic stress, trauma professionals and mental health staff can help reduce health related consequences of violence. ▀

Gregory A. Leskin, Ph.D., completed his NIMH post-doctoral fellowship at the National Center for PTSD Boston, VAMC in 1998. He is currently a clinical psychologist at the National Center for PTSD, VA Palo Alto Health Care System. His primary area of interest is behavioral integration of PTSD services in primary care settings. Dr. Leskin can be reached at Gregory.Leskin@med.va.gov.

Training Opportunities

Building an Effective Media Strategy

Have you found yourself advising victims on what to do when reporters call? Are you troubled by a specific reporter who seems insensitive to the trauma victims endure? Maybe a reporter has asked you for an interview and you want to know how to prepare yourself.

If you have found yourself in any of these situations – or if you just want to know why journalists do what they do – please accept our invitation to participate in an upcoming online course or face-to-face workshop on *Building an Effective Media Strategy*. These educational opportunities are offered through the Victims and the Media Program at Michigan State University's School of Journalism, with funding from the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission.

- *Free workshop at Michigan State University, May 8* – This on-campus workshop supports and expands upon the online course. Interactive sessions allow you to ask journalists why they make certain decisions. You will hear first-person stories from colleagues who have faced the media spotlight. We will premiere the new video in the Victims and the Media Series, "Reporting

on the Victims of Sexual Assault: Asking the Right Questions." Mini-workshops allow you to choose from a variety of options, such as the opportunity to be interviewed on camera and have your performance critiqued by TV professionals. Sign up now to reserve your seat!

- *Free three-week online course beginning June 9* – All it takes to participate in the *Building an Effective Media Strategy* online course is (1) any computer with Internet access and (2) as little as two hours a week for three weeks from June 9-27. The first week focuses on the role of the media, the second explores specific ways to improve victim coverage, and the third offers tips that can help you tell your story. The class includes opportunities to comment and interact with other participants, take un-graded self-tests, view video clips, and exchange emails on problems and personal plans with course developer Bonnie Bucqueroux, coordinator of the Victims and the Media Program. ▼

To register for these trainings, please visit the Victims and the Media website www.victims.jrn.msu.edu or call Linda Hartwig (517-353-6430) with questions.

Michigan Victim Assistance Academy

The sixth annual Michigan Victim Assistance Academy (MVAA) will be held in East Lansing June 15-20, 2003.

This 45-hour academically-based course features the foundations of victimology, victims' rights, and new developments in the field of victim assistance.

This rigorous program balances group learning strategies with attention to individual participant goals. Participants are given time each day to identify important information gained and to consider how they will apply that knowledge.

Interested candidates must meet criteria that include a minimum of one year of experience working with crime victims and a demonstrated commitment to service for crime victims. Multiple professionals within a community are

*I feel refreshed
and loaded with
new information
for my agency. I
will encourage all
to apply for the
next academy.
—2002 Academy
participant*

encouraged to attend as teams. Participants are eligible to apply for academic and professional credits upon completion of the Academy. All participants receive a certificate of graduation on the final day.

The MVAA is supported by a grant awarded to the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University by the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission. This grant comes from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. ▼

For more information contact the School of Criminal Justice (517-355-9648) or Audrey Martini at martini@msu.edu. Additional information can be found at www.cj.msu.edu/~outreach/mvaa.

5th Annual Council of Advocates

■ by Shari Murgittroyd

Dedicated victim advocates representing VOCA-funded organizations in Michigan convened in East Lansing on November 20, 2002, for the Fifth Annual Council of Advocates. The Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission (CVSC) and the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) organized this event to explore issues affecting crime victim services, to receive feedback from VOCA grantees, and to provide advocates the opportunity to network.

Each victim advocate represents an agency specializing in services to one or more diverse victim populations, such as child abuse, domestic violence, drunk driving crashes, sexual assault, crime victims in American Indian communities, those accessing hospital-based services, and victims working with prosecuting attorneys. In addition to recruiting representatives from different service populations, the CVSC invited agencies from various geographic locations as well. Participants traveled from Battle Creek, Hannahville Indian Community, Mt. Clemens, Detroit, Pontiac, Saginaw, and Paw Paw.

Prior to the day-long event, agency representatives were invited to submit questions or discussion topics to the CVSC concerning victim services and VOCA grant administration. All submissions were addressed during the Question & Answer/Open Discussion period of the agenda. The meeting then lends itself to a focus group structure to address such concerns as on-line application and reporting processes, article ideas for *The Michigan Advocate*, grant compliance and needs assessment, and program evaluation trainings. Comments and feedback recorded throughout the day provide rich data to help shape future goals and activities of the CVSC and Michigan VOCA grant administration.

A meeting summary of the Council of Advocates will be mailed to all Michigan VOCA-funded agencies in April to keep advocates and administrators informed of current issues. Please contact Shari Murgittroyd at (517-324-7349) or smurgitt@mphi.org if you wish to receive a complimentary copy of the Fifth Annual Council of Advocates meeting summary. ■

Shari Murgittroyd, MSW, is the Project Leader of the CVSC Technical Assistance Project at the Michigan Public Health Institute.

Web Resources

Office for Victims of Crime National Crime Victims' Rights Week

www.ojp.gov/ovc

This site provides resources to help victim advocates plan and implement victims' rights activities in their area.

2003 National Crime Victims' Rights Week Resource Guide

www.ojp.gov/ovc/ncvrw

This resource guide for the 2003 NCVRW provides statistical overviews and resources, a detailed list of landmarks in victims' rights and services, information on working with the media, camera-ready artwork (see example on page 3 of this newsletter), and sample speeches.

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, University of Minnesota, School of Social Work

www.dvinstitute.org

This site allows access to the Institute's biannual newsletter, "Assembling the Pieces: An African American Perspective on Community and Family Violence," and offers a host of information related to violence in the African American Community.

National Criminal Justice Reference Service

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/ovcres

The OVC Crime Resource Center is an information clearinghouse for victim issues. Email AskOVC@ojp.usdoj.gov to reach information specialists who will answer questions relating to victims' issues.

The Michigan Advocate is on the web!

*We're excited to inform you that *The Michigan Advocate* is moving to an electronic version beginning with the next edition. All future editions will be exclusively on the web. To ensure you don't miss the next edition, send your email address to jsykes@mphi.org. Michigan VOCA grantees will automatically receive the electronic version and do not need to provide email addresses.*

Visit

**[www.ccrhop.org/
michiganadvocate.htm](http://www.ccrhop.org/michiganadvocate.htm)**

*for copies of this newsletter, archived
editions, and all future newsletters!*

FY 2003-2004 VOCA Victim Assistance Grant Funding Schedule

April 4, 2003	<i>Final Application submission deadline</i>
April 6-12, 2003	<i>National Crime Victims' Rights Week: Fulfill the Promise</i>
October 1, 2003 - September 30, 2004	<i>VOCA agreement fiscal year</i>

Upcoming Events

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April 6-12, 2003
Contact OVC at 1-800-627-6872
Resource Guide available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc

Michigan Crime Victims' Rights Week Vigil

April 9, 2003, 6:00 p.m.
Lansing, Michigan (in the Capitol Rotunda)
Contact Denice Purves at 517-373-8900

Victims and the Media*

Building an Effective Media Strategy
May 8, 2003
June 9-27, 2003
MSU, East Lansing, Michigan
Contact Linda Hartwig at 517-353-6430
www.victimtimes.jrn.msu.edu

PAAM Annual Victim Rights Training Conference*

Absolute Essentials for Advocates
Empathy Training & Listening Skills
May 28-30, 2003
Thompsonville, Michigan
Contact Terri Young at 517-334-6060 ext. 815

2003 National Victim Assistance Academy

June 8-13, 2003 (Topeka, Kansas)
June 22-27, 2003 (Charleston, South Carolina)
Contact OVC TTAC at 1-866-682-8822
Email: ttac@ovcttac.org

Michigan Victim Assistance Academy*

June 15-20, 2003
East Lansing, Michigan
Contact Audrey Martini at 517-355-9648

VOCA Program Evaluation Training*

Program Evaluation for VOCA Grantees – Level I Training
June 16, 2003
East Lansing, Michigan
Contact Shari Murgittroyd at 517-324-7349

MCADSV Conference*

Women of Color Institute
Our Movement: Equality, Justice, Freedom
June 21-22, 2003
Detroit, Michigan
Contact Lynn Lucas at 517-347-7000 ext. 21
www.mcadsv.org/trainings.html

MCADSV Conference*

Social Justice: Remembering, Recognizing, Envisioning
June 23-25, 2003
Detroit, Michigan
Contact Lynn Lucas at 517-347-7000 ext. 21
www.mcadsv.org/trainings.html

NOVA North American Victim Assistance Conference

August 24-29, 2003
New Orleans, Louisiana
Contact NOVA at 202-232-6682

***VOCA grantees may utilize approved travel funds to attend training**

VOCA Grant Website:

<http://sigmaweb.mdch.state.mi.us/sigma2/>

Coming Soon

WWW: Walter's Words of Wisdom

Sigmaweb Grant Technology Q & A

Look for Walter's insights in the next edition!

Michigan Department
of Community Health



Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor
Janet Olszewski, Director

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